ENGLISH ROMANTICISM AND THE CELTIC WORLD

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Contents

Introduction: romancing the Celt

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The growth of 'four nations' British literary history in the last decade has brought with it new approaches to the 'Celtic' idea in eighteenth-century and Romantic studies. Yet there is a danger of losing sight of the extent to which Celticism was used as a tool in the construction and expansion of the post-1745 British state. This is one of the central concerns of this volume.

We can see the British use and abuse of the Celtic in its starkest, most jingoistic form in a song by the patriotic English songwriter, Charles Dibdin. At the height of the Napoleonic wars, he writes:

> Fra Ossian to Bruce,
> The bra deeds to produce,
> Would take monny and monny a long hour to scan;
> For mickle were the bairds
> Sung the feats of Scottish lairds,
> When the swankies in array,
> The canty pipes did play—
> 'There never was a Scot but was true to his Clan.'
> . . .
> From Egypt's burning sands,
> Made red by Scottish hands,
> The invincible Skybalds fled, aw to a man;
> For the standard that they bore
> From the keeper's grasp we tore,
> And the French were all dismay'd,
> 'There never was a Scot but was true to his Clan.'[1]

Here we find the confection of Scoto-British Celticism in the service of British military aggression. Ancient history has been overwritten with eighteenth-century literary history as James Macpherson's identification of the legendary 'Ossianic' materials with Scotland rather than Ireland has taken root and this Celtic Scotland is seen as seamlessly antecedent to the Anglophone medieval Scotland of Robert the Bruce.[2] Ethnic distinctions

are erased from historical consciousness. We see another British literary appropriation as the Scots language literary revival of the eighteenth century is garishly drawn upon (so that Scottish 'bairds' celebrate heroic 'swankies') to be subsumed within the newfangled British imperial myth of the 'fighting Jock'.

The gradual establishment during the long eighteenth century, and more particularly in the Romantic period, of what Stuart Piggott has called 'Anglo-Celtic sanguinity' is by 1866 being given by Matthew Arnold a genetic fingerprint.[3] Seeking to unravel the racial pedigree of 'English' poetry, Arnold suggests that this poetry's 'honesty' is derived from a 'Saxon' source, its 'energy' from 'Celtic' and 'Roman' sources.[4] Clearly, such a postulation was intended to distinguish rather than to devolve English literature and identity. The import of classical Rome was for Arnold, as father of the modern upstart discipline of English Studies, a necessary, venerable ingredient. What, though, might help distinguish Britain from the more purely Teutonic identity to be found in the nation's increasingly powerful imperial rival, Prussia? The 'Celtic' component, particularly its 'turn for natural magic' was brought to bear here; and this named propensity Arnold found at the high point of the Romantic movement in England, especially, in the poetry of John Keats.[5] Victorian culture, in other words, looked back to Romantic literature in search of an Anglo-Celtic identity, and what was available to such a search in the English literature of the Romantic period forms much of the subject matter of the present volume.

If the incorporation of the Celtic gene within British identity during the nineteenth century can be aligned very often with militaristic and imperial aspirations, we might nevertheless suggest that to begin with Celticism had been appealed to, much more innocently, as part of the attempt to evade the ideological and internecine strife that had plagued the British polity from the English Civil War down to the Jacobite rebellions. Such an appeal, which bore such spectacular fruit, while simultaneously coming under intense scrutiny, in the English writing of the Romantic period, began at least as early as 1750. Certainly, in that year, William Collins in his 'Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland' addressed the Scottish dramatist, John Home, with the injunction to 'wake perforce thy Doric quill'(p. 56).[6] Paradoxically, Scotland is seen by this English poet as a land of simultaneous realism and romance, where 'ev'ry Herd, by sad experience, knows / How wing'd with fate their Elph-shot arrows fly' (p. 57). This Scotland was to be the ideal site of a revival for an imaginative sensibility which had become tarnished elsewhere in Britain under the cultural, economic and doctrinal pressures (all largely encompassing arid

is a rationalism of one kind or another) during the previous century. This
is a Scotland where:

> Ev'n yet preserv'd, how often may'st thou hear,
> > Where to the Pole the Boreal Mountains run,
> > Taught by the Father to his list'ning Son
> Strange lays whose pow'r had charm'd a Spenser's Ear.
> At Ev'ry Pause, before thy Mind possest,
> > Old Runic Bards shall seem to rise around
> With uncouth Lyres, in many-colour'd Vest,
> > Their Matted Hair with boughs fantastic crown'd
> Whether Thou bidst the well-taught Hind repeat
> > The Choral Dirge that mourns some Chieftain brave
> When Ev'ry Shrieking Maid her bosom beat
> > And strew'd with choicest herbs his scented Grave
> Or whether sitting in the Shepherd's Shiel
> > Thou hear'st some Sounding Tale of War's alarms
> When at the Bugle's call with fire and steel,
> > The Sturdy Clans poured forth their bonny swarms,
> And hostile Brothers met to prove each Other's arms.

(p. 57)

Though drawing upon real Scottish Highland source material, particularly
Martin Martin's *Description of the Western Isles of Scotland* (1706), we find
here Collins seeking out, and finding in this highland locus, a site of vital,
charged even, gothic sensibility. Yet the synthetic nature of all this is most
clearly revealed in the stanza above by the reference to 'old Runic Bards'
more properly to be associated with Scandinavia. The Celtic may well be
imaged, by English culture, as a site of renewal, but the image remains an
English construction, and the chapters that follow engage with a number
of specifically Romantic constructions of the Celtic and offer wide-ranging
support for, and expansions of, Howard D. Weinbrot's argument that the
eighteenth-century search for ethnic roots in British literature was creatively
eclectic amid the ferment of new nation building.[7] As we shall see, in the
years leading up to the Romantic period, and most dramatically in the Ro-
mantic period itself, this eclecticism is massively increased by the materials
supplied to it by expanding Empire and its attendant 'Orientalism', and
European war.

That England transformed and appropriated the Celtic in the service of
Britishness is, of course, only part of the picture. The addressee of Collins'
poem, John Home, himself indulged in a similar kind of polysemous cre-
ativity in his *Douglas* (1757), the text which, more than any other prior
to Macpherson's 'Ossian', located Scotland as the site *par excellence* of

sentimental and noble pathos. Equally, however, dealing with the wars between Scotland and her ancient foe the 'Norsemen', *Douglas* is full of Shakespearean echoes, draws upon the old English ballad, 'Gil Morrice', as a key element in its plot and invokes in the preface written especially for London performances, the legendary name of Percy as well as Douglas.[8] Home, the man who had fought on the Hanoverian side during the rebellion of 1745, exemplifies a careful cross-national and cross-political appeal to remembrance of 'the primitive' past alongside the new and progressive *Pax Britannica* delivered with the final pacification of Scotland. He also signals a kind of cross-fertilising cultural dialogue between Anglo and Celtic culture in which each culture looks to the other for revitalisation. The chapters of this volume repeatedly foreground and explore instances of precisely this kind of dialogue in the texts of various Romantic and post-Romantic literary traditions.

The cocktail of primitivism and progress across the Whig and Tory British divide persisted throughout the rest of the eighteenth and into the nineteenth century. High Tory Walter Scott is the best example of its survival into the Romantic period and beyond. In *Waverley* (1814), Scott presents an oxymoronic configuration close to Collins's depiction of the 'bonny swarms' of clansmen, as the result of the misfiring gun of Jacobite figure, Evan Dhu:

A thousand birds of prey, hawks, kites, carrion-crows, and ravens, disturbed from the lodgings which they had just taken up for the evening, rose at the report of the gun, and mingled their hoarse and discordant notes with the echoes which replied to it, and with the roar of the mountain cataracts.[9]

Here in this dangerous but sublime landscape, we find a particularly subtle version of the 'colonising, animating gaze' (p. 151) to which Murray G. W. Pittock in his essay in this volume alerts us. Pittock provides an incisive definition of the primitivism of the age and points to its characteristic influence on relations between English Romantic culture and the Celtic world. It is, he says:

... a profound commitment to the past, but one depoliticised in the context either of the frisson of *Rauberromantik* (bandit romanticism) tourism, or in a commitment to contemporary ideas of liberty which owed more to the hermeneutics through which primitive simplicity was codified than to a historicised grasp of its reality (p. 153)

As the present volume frequently reveals, in the English writing of the Romantic period, the Celtic is simultaneously reinvented for, reappropriated by, and yet excluded from, the historical and political British present.

On the other hand, in poems such as 'The Vision' (1786), Robert Burns demonstrates the aesthetic largesse and political and cultural idealisation that is also implied by Pittock.[10] Here Burns dovetails gothically or supernaturally endowed Celticism with contemporary discussions of 'genius'. The primordially sublime spirit of Coila appears in a dream to the narrator who is tired out in mind and body after a hard day's exertions farming. 'The Vision' is divided into 'Duan First' and 'Duan Second' after the manner of Macpherson's Ossianic production, 'Cath-Loda', as the suitably ethnic framework into which Coila steps to grant the narrator bardic instruction. A Coila who has been reading Virgil explains:

> Know, the great *Genius* of this Land,
> Has many a light, aerial band,
> Who, all beneath his high command,
>   Harmoniously,
> As *Arts* or *Arms* they understand,
>   Their labors ply.
>   (145–50)

Burns here shows himself more than capable of complicity with the creation of the kind of image of the Celtic world that English culture frequently projected on to it in the name of Britishness. Aside from the Habbie Simson stanza form, Burns does not invoke in the course of the poem his great predecessors in the eighteenth-century Scots poetry revival, Allan Ramsay and Robert Fergusson, nor the usual Scots martial heroes, Wallace and Bruce (though, ironically, the title of the poem may be derived loosely from Allan Ramsay's medieval 'forgery', 'The Vision' (1724), a work celebrating William Wallace). Instead 'The Vision' attempts to negotiate a very diffuse British heritage. Such negotiations form a fundamental focus of this book. In the case of 'The Vision', the exemplary poets of 'this land' are the self-consciously British poets James Thomson, for his landscape-painting ability, and James Beattie, for his examination of the growth of primitive poetic faculty in 'The Minstrel' (1771–4). The great military men explicitly name-checked are contemporary soldiers in the service of modern Britain (though the narrator is also given a sign of 'Scotland's' pre-medieval military greatness in being shown the tomb of Coilus, 'king of the Picts').[11] Utilising the stanza form that it does, its 'Celtic' machinery is yoked to a language which has much in common with the diction of Shenstone and Gray (both of whom are mentioned in the poem). The creation of Britishness is not simply an English imposition rooted in English imperialist drives, then, and another of the principal concerns of this volume is the crucial role played in

English, Romantic-period constructions, cementings and problematisings of British identity by Scottish, Irish and Welsh writers.

Yet the volume is not only concerned with Romantic negotiations of a British heritage and Romantic-period constructions of a British identity. Other kinds of Anglo-Celtic dialogue make themselves heard in the chapters that follow. One key area of interest, for instance, is the part played by Celtic culture in the genesis of Romanticism as a literary phenomenon. Indeed, Burns's poetry is a crucial precursor of, and influence on, the *Lyrical Ballads* of Wordsworth and Coleridge, though lacking the sureness the latter text exemplifies where, in Pittock's phrase, this 'marked the exaltation of the spirit of the people in the most poor and remote provinces' and becomes 'the voice of the true human spirit' (p. 154). It is somewhat ironic that it is the English poets, Wordsworth (who draws in a sustained way on the 'poetical' character of Scotland, as Pittock shows in this volume) and Coleridge, who are able to operate ethnically much less self-consciously than Burns after Celtic-engined primitivism has permeated British culture.

If Burns's poetry was a crucial influence on English Romanticism, so were James Macpherson's 'Ossian' productions. As Daffyd Moore elucidates in this volume, notwithstanding the many enthusiastic engagements with 'Ossian' by Blake, Coleridge and others, Macpherson has been far too readily excluded from 'the grand parade of English literary historiography' (p. 50). In his careful stripping away of prejudiced critical assumptions, Moore highlights the fact that there is much more significance to the 'Ossian' texts than merely their confectionary nature: 'whatever we might make of the tradition Macpherson is seen as fostering, however we wish he had done things differently, we should not ignore the threat that this tradition, and the very possibility that *Ossian* holds out that such traditions exist, has posed to whiggish English literary historiography' (p. 50). In other words, even as it fits awkwardly into the supposed scheme of British literary progress towards the 'authenticity' of the Romantic age, 'Ossian' represents a fertile source of the 'otherness' which is so much caught up in the search for the authentic for the ages of Sensibility and Romanticism. It is a key document for English, British and European Romanticism, as Moore shows in numerous examples, so that, as Pittock describes it, the 'Ossian' texts set up a dialogue between an older disappearing world and a new late eighteenth-century world so central to that which we would we now call 'the Romantic'.[12]

While engaging with Anglo-Celtic dialogues that are significant at British and European levels, this volume also considers more localised Anglo-Celtic

dialogues. Andrew Nicholson's finely particular reading of the interaction between Byron and Scott reveals an extended dialogue between this self-consciously, but problematically, 'English' writer and the 'wizard of the north' that displays a deep appreciation by the former of the latter's innovatory propensities in concrete poetic form as well as a shared concern with the more nebulous quality of 'right' poetic feeling. Previous hostility on Byron's part to Scott in *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1809), which itself instances an anti-Scottish attitude of the period in the face of a rather rigidly neo-classical reviewing academy in Edinburgh represented by Francis Jeffrey and the Whiggish *Edinburgh Review*, was eventually replaced by deep appreciation.[13] Byron's designation of Scott as 'the Ariosto of the North' referred not to Scott's British location, but his location rather as a northern European more generally and sprang from Byron's appreciation that Scott's Scottish medievalism was an act of 'mainstream', rather than peripheral (wizard-like), Celtic restoration. As Nicholson records, Byron saw that Scott 'was now numbered amongst Chaucer, Spenser, Dryden and Pope as one who had "neatly grafted" "New words" "on a Gallic phrase" and "by force of rhyme" "enrich'd our islands' ill-united tongues" ' (p. 131). In theme, diction and form (especially, specifically, in his retrieval after Swift and Butler of the tetrameter), Byron saw Scott as engaging with history in a more real and complex fashion than has usually been appreciated by criticism before or since. We might say that Scott for Byron is crucial in the British restoration of, in William Collins's phrase, 'Strange lays, whose pow'r had charm'd a Spenser's Ear'.

A very nice identification of a further Byronic dialogue, this time with himself, is made in Bernard Beatty's chapter. Here what is at stake is the relation of Scotland to the rest of European culture in a mind strongly influenced by, but never limited to, Anglo-centric notions of Britishness. In spite of Byron's distancing of himself from his Scottish background, especially in *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (a chiastic title suggestive of Byron's defiance in this context), in wholly Byronic fashion, he still advertises his repudiated origins. In Beatty's reading, a Byron emerges whose cosmopolitanism is marked by a species of negative capability, where nationhood is concerned. Byron's gradually increasing recognition as his poetic career progresses of his Celtic-Scottish cradle, nurtured to some extent by his reading of Scott's novels, is an empathetic, and fundamentally Romantic, reclamation primed by his recognition of the cultural 'other' in his cosmopolitan peregrinations in Europe.

The most incendiary type of dialogue between a Celtic periphery and a British centre might be expected to occur in the case of Ireland. The

chapters by Bradley, Kelsall and O'Neill combine, however, to offer an account of the ongoing dialogue between Irish literary culture and English Romanticism that undercuts this expectation.

Nationalism in Ireland, at the hightide mark of the rebellious 1790s, tended to follow a prosaic rather than what Arnold might have called a 'Celtic' pattern. Notoriously, Theobald Wolfe Tone, showing irritation at the festival of Belfast harpists in 1792, expressed the desire that these new bards 'be hanged'.[14] Ironically enough, Tone, to escape the indignity of the gallows after the failure of the United Irishmen uprising, slit his own throat and through this act invested himself with an Ossianic-like glamour. That year, 1798, may have been invested elsewhere through the impact of the *Lyrical Ballads* with the idea of 'real language', but in Ireland plain political speaking began to disappear under an often hagiographic Celtic nationalism. As Katie Trumpener records of William Drennan, a founder-member of the United Irishmen and previously a forceful political poet, '[his] strong dissatisfaction with the 1801 Act of Union . . . finds expression not in a resumption of revolutionary plotting but rather in the composition of poetic strains of almost Ossianic melancholy'.[15]

Complex relations existed, then, not simply between the Celtic and the Anglo, but between the distinct Celtic cultures themselves. Here a text that became a literary building block of Britishness suggests a consoling mode of poetic composition to anti-British Celtic culture. The problematic literary relationships between Irish periphery and British centre, however, are not so easily pinned down. P. B. Shelley's critique of the oppression of Ireland, for example, is unravelled here by Arthur Bradley who traces the 'intriguing parallels between Shelley's representation of Robert Emmet and Laon and Cythna' (p. 125). Bradley points to Emmet's admonition, 'Let no man write my epitaph' (p. 126) while Ireland remained unfree, words attributed to the revolutionary when in the dock for high treason in 1803. Bradley draws a very striking comparison between Emmet's outlook and what Laon 'calls America: "An epitaph of glory for the tomb / Of murdered Europe may thy fame be made" ' (p. 128). We see Shelley through the example of an Irish revolutionary, then, expressing the desire for a new kind of *Ancien Régime* – shaking revolution that is the polar opposite to what we glimpsed in the utterance of Charles Dibdin. Yet for Shelley, according to Bradley, 'Ireland is seen as merely a local example of an international phenomenon, and Irish politics is just a stepping stone on the path to globalised reform' (p. 118). In Shelley's Romantic representation of Ireland, Celtic 'otherness' and Britishness are both subsumed into, and negated by, a much larger, if only potential, universality.

Shelley's exuberant combination of Celticism and Romantic Oriental-
ism, however, serves to remind us of the ultimately stagnant nature of the
Irish dynamic he represents. Thomas Moore's *Lalla Rookh* (1817) is also in
some of its aspects, perhaps, an allegorised reading of the Irish situation,
but is all too obliquely so, coming as it does from the pen of the man
who was Ireland's national lyrist in the first third of the nineteenth century.
The roots of modern Irish independence are to be found in a more recent,
late nineteenth-century wave of Celtic nationalism common, at least in
certain forms of cultural expression, to Scotland, Wales and other parts of
the British Isles. And, as Malcolm Kelsall shows in his analysis of Charles
Lever's *Luttrell of Arran* (1865), this nationalism can sometimes seem to
be 'divided between . . . the old, dying world of Burkean conservatism and
Byronic revolt on the one hand, and, on the other, a new world struggling
to define selfhood and place' (p. 185). Within this scenario, the character
of Tim O'Rorke represents 'the mindless mantra of old-style Jacobinism,
now yoked to racial hatred'. For Lever, the one-nation Tory, the residue
of old political nationalism now dangerously combined with Celtic eth-
nicity makes for a 'historically regressive' phenomenon (p. 189), when the
pressing social problem of the day is posed by the blight of the potato
famine. Describing Lever's attitude, Kelsall tells us that '[s]piritually he
belongs with those late Romantics of what Shelley called (in the preface to
The Revolt of Islam) "the age of despair" which followed the Enlightened
dream in the bloody realities of the revolutionary wars of the Napoleonic
era' (p. 189).We might certainly suggest that the dark and sceptical ironies
of *Luttrell of Aran*, which refuse to idealise either past or present for Celtic
Ireland, are akin to, if less humorously voiced than, the sceptical ironies
that resist idealisations of all kinds in Byron's *Don Juan*.

And this refusal to idealise surfaces again as Michael O'Neill deals
with the response of contemporary Irish poets to the English Romantic
canon. These poets frequently stand in ironic affirmation of 'the capacity of
Romantic poetry to enact and criticise longing and desire [as] part of its
fascinating doubleness' (p. 196). Seamus Heaney here is exemplary, feeling,
as O'Neill reminds us, that he has 'no rights on / The English lyric' (p. 202).
Equally, strongly inculcated with Wordsworthian notions of childhood, of
the moment and of imaginative education as he is, Heaney, writing from
within the troubled Ulster and Irish locus ultimately lays 'claim to a . . . state
of poetic autonomy, a state that has exacted sacrifices but is alive to possi-
bilities' (p. 203). Yet Heaney's bog-poems, juxtaposing the contemporarily
troubled Ireland and pre-Christian Jutland allowing the poet to conclude
wryly that he feels 'Unhappy and at home', bring us full circle as we see

(quite literally earthed) the Celtic sensibility schooled in Romantic ethnic symbolism.

One of the distinctive features of this volume is its focus on the fertile relationship between late eighteenth-century Welsh culture and English Romanticism. Here the volume extends the ground-breaking work of Katie Trumpener on Anglo-Celtic relations in the period. Unfortunately, Trumpener's discussion of Anglo-Welsh relations is brief – her principal interest being in Anglo-Scottish and Anglo-Irish cultural relations – while her study is centred on the Romantic Novel. Here sustained attention is given to the relationship between Anglo-Welsh relations and English Romantic poetry.

The influence of Welsh culture extended far beyond England in the period, of course: as Caroline Franklin points out, Glamorgan on its own 'produced radical Dissenter Dr Richard Price, an adviser to the new American republic, and the Deist David Williams, who had been invited to advise France on drawing up its new constitution' (p. 74). Yet the Welsh influence on English Romantic poetry emerges as seminal. The influence of eighteenth-century Welsh nationalism, and its revival of Welsh legends such as that of Madoc – indeed its transformation of those legends along increasingly radical lines – are here traced through to various English reworkings of those legends during the Romantic period by poets such as Southey and Hemans. A Welsh context for Coleridge's and Southey's Pantisocracy is uncovered. Wordsworth's sense of Snowdon, and of North Wales more generally, as a place of symbolic resonance is traced back to the re-imaging of Welsh landscapes that occurred in the numerous travel guides of the eighteenth century by both Welsh and English writers. The roots of Southey's, Byron's and Shelley's 'Orientalism' and of their occupation with tensions between nationhood and empire are traced back through William Jones to the work of the Welsh revivalists, their interest in alternatives to the classical tradition, their simultaneous centralising and exoticising of marginalised Celtic culture, their feeding and encouraging of 'the Romantic hunger for the primitive and the exotic' (p. 26), their pivotal role in the shift between the culture of the Enlightenment and that culture we usually call Romantic, and their invaluable reinvigoration of the 'classical gentility of English poetry' with materials drawn from Celtic (and, in the case of Jones, Oriental) sources: allowing, for example, Southey, through his exotically Welsh detailing in *Madoc*, to stylistically assault the 'classical epic as the highest form of poetry' (p. 80).

The work and influence of key Welsh individuals are also discussed in some detail. The subject of Michael J. Franklin's chapter,

William Jones, whose *Grammar of the Persian Language* (1771), Franklin suggests, 'inaugurated Romantic Orientalism' (p. 28) is shown to be a pivotal figure in the movement towards Romantic reversals of (imperialist) English notions of centre and periphery, as offering an early example of what would become central Romantic anxieties about nationhood and empire, as a key influence on Romantic constructions of 'the East', and as a direct influence in numerous ways on the work of Southey, Byron and Shelley.[16] Evan Evans's *Specimens* (1764) is foregrounded as a 'pioneering work of lasting significance for the Celtic revival both for appropriation and imitation in England, and in the reanimation of bardic nationalism in Wales' (p. 26). Edward Williams, one of 'that older generation of antiquarians, folklorists and etymologists who bridged the gap between Enlightenment historiography and the Romantic primitivism of Southey's generation', is brought into view as a 'brilliant forger' to place alongside Macpherson and Chatterton whose Welsh mythmaking was massively influential on subsequent English, and Welsh, culture (p. 71); as is Owen Pugh's enormous influence on Southey, the lasting influence of 'ancient Britain interpretators' such as Byrant, Davies and Stukeley, and the revolutionary influence of Lewis Morris and 'the Morisiad' – an influence pivotal in the creation of an ancient Welsh cultural tradition distinct from England's classical inheritance and rooted in a politicised, poetic Bardic tradition, and one that informs the work of English writers from Blake to Southey, Wordsworth and Hemans.

Nevertheless, the volume is not solely concerned with Celtic influences on English Romantic writing, but with also acknowledging the Celtic-Romantic relationship as more complex and dynamic than a process of straightforward, one-way influence. It seeks to explore further the dynamics of Anglo-Welsh cultural relations in this period. How, for instance, was Welsh culture transformed in its use by English Romantic-period writing? And what influence did English Romanticism have on subsequent Welsh culture?

Here matters of consumption, reception, appropriation and ideology come to the fore and a number of the contributors to this volume get to grips with these. And various kinds of English appropriation of Welsh culture emerge very strongly – appropriations in the service of Romantic, Christian, British and Imperial ideologies.

The English Romantics were handed a highly politicised Welsh inheritance. William Jones, friend of Benjamin Franklin, strongly influenced by Locke, and a precursor of Paine and Godwin, was a radical Whig whose 'On the Gods of Greece, Italy and India' transformed 'for many Welsh, and indeed English, Tories', 'the Druidic Oak into the liberty tree' (p. 32).

Edward Williams, 'the authority of the day on Welsh culture' (p. 71) and a 'radical in the Blakean mould' (p. 71), offered, in works such as *Poems, Lyrical and Pastoral* (1794), 'a vision of the Welsh bardic tradition in which poetry . . . became a vehicle of theological, political and moral instruction' (p. 72), and, despite having his work branded by the *Gentleman's Magazine* as 'a heterogeneous and unnatural mixture [of] poetry and politics' (p. 78), described a Bardic tradition stretching to his own day in which bards hailed 'the Goddess of liberty' (p. 79). Evan Evans, too, offered his readership a politicised image of this Bardic tradition: in his 'A Paraphrase of Psalm CXXXVII, alluding to the Captivity and Treatment of the Welsh Bards by King Edward 1', for example, he has the Welsh Bards resist Edward's tyranny by hanging up their harps and 'silently disobeying the order to entertain their captors' (p. 27), while Lewis Morris looked back to his own Welsh ancestors as 'brave people . . . who struggled so long with a superior power for their liberty' (p. 24). Each of these writers, in their own way, alongside 'the eighteenth-century emigration movement' (p. 70) in Wales that inspired a newly Millenarian revival of the legend of Madoc, produced images of Welsh culture and history that 'encouraged politicised interpretation' (p. 22).

Sometimes, English Romantic writers accepted the invitation offered to them: J. R. Watson's chapter on Wordsworth argues that North Wales, for example, with 'its defiance of the Roman or English conquerors' suited 'well with Wordsworth's own resistance to tyranny and metropolitan dominance' (p. 96), and shows the poet's use of figures such as Llewellyn the Great often to be a 'celebration' not only of Welsh national defiance, but also 'of what *The Prelude* calls "independence and stern liberty"' (p. 97). In a different way, as William D. Brewer shows us, Hemans's bards retain their 'traditional values and patriot feelings' (p. 180), but in various ways, these writers also display that Romantic, ideological tendency, famously described by Jerome McGann, towards

extreme forms of displacement and poetic conceptualisation whereby the actual human issues with which the poetry is concerned are resituated in a variety of idealised localities.[17]

As Watson shows, Wordsworth's *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*, for instance, 'reveal much of interest to the student of Celtic influences on Wordsworth' and 'beneath the steady progress of Christianity' they describe, 'there is an undercurrent of sympathy for the ancient Druids' (p. 98). Yet, as Watson goes on to demonstrate, while the Druids were 'inspirational' figures who 'encouraged the people of Anglesey in their resistance to the Roman invasion'

(p. 97), and despite images of the Druids offered by Edward Williams, for example, in which the rituals of the Druids of the Romano-British Era are described as 'linked to the Jewish Cabbala and Brahminism...entirely by-passing institutional Christianity' (p. 74), they become in Wordsworth's account of the Christianisation of the British Isles, 'auxiliars of the Cross. Wordsworth sees the ancient religion as somehow incorporated into the new reign of Christianity, and the Druids have turned incongruously into [Christian] crusaders' (p. 100). Figures that belong to a 'concrete and particular' historical context have been 'resituated' by Wordsworth in these sonnets 'in an idealised',[18] ideological, Christian 'locality' in 'what seems more like an exercise in pleasing the Sir George Beaumonts of this world than an engagement with the Welsh experience of earlier years' (p. 100).

In a different way, for Hemans, the subject of Brewer's chapter, bardic patriotism becomes a desirable, universal (rather than specifically Welsh) attribute. In Hemans's Bards, that is to say, we see a 'conceptualisation' that involves the loss of that 'concrete and particular' context (or contexts – one ancient, one eighteenth-century, both in tension with another, more powerful culture) that originally generated the images she is drawing on, and the resituating of those images in an 'idealised', ideological, location of international nationalism. Bardic figures dramatising inter-national tension are transformed into models of an international 'cosmopolitanism' that, for Hemans, offer universal dignity, integrity and harmony.

Here Brewer's analysis continues the debate recently opened up by Kirsteen Daly about 'how the tenets of benevolent Enlightenment cosmopolitanism were retained, renegotiated and reformulated in the Romantic Period'.[19] Equally, however, Brewer's analysis of Hemans's poetry suggests that the radical Whig attitudes that latched hold of and transformed the figure of 'the Welsh Bard' in the eighteenth century are notably displaced in Hemans's bardic figures by something more 'spiritual and aesthetic' – and in Wordsworthian ways. Hemans's bards, patriots though they are, are valued primarily for a bardic genius that exemplifies 'an eye that can see Nature, a heart that can feel Nature, and a boldness that dares follow Nature' (p. 175). Hemans's ancient bards, 'resemble the Druids celebrated in Wordsworth's *Prelude*'(p. 174) – indeed for Hemans, Wordsworth was a 'True bard and holy' (p. 175) – and do so precisely because Hemans has transformed her own bards according to, and in the service of, a Wordsworthian Romantic ideology. Hemans transforms the bards of the eighteenth-century Welsh Revival into so many Wordsworthian worshippers of Nature and in doing so forces them to undergo a version of that ideological

reinvention described by 'Tintern Abbey' – a reinvention that involves the 'spiritual displacement' of the historical and political and a resituating of conflict 'out of a socio-historical context and into an ideological one'.[20] In Hemans's bards, we might say, historical experience has disappeared in 'the transformation of fact into idea, and of experience into ideology'.[21] Here is an ever more precise understanding of what we mean when we say that Celtic culture was 'Romanticised' in the Romantic period.

The appropriation of the eighteenth-century Welsh Revival by a British, imperialist ideology is described in Caroline Franklin's chapter on Southey's *Madoc*. Drawing on and expanding Lynda Pratt's important recent reconsideration of Southey's *Madoc*,[22] Franklin further opens up the discussion of poetic precedents of, and parallels to, the novelistic appropriations of Celtic culture in the service of British Imperialism that are discussed at length by Trumpener.

Franklin shows that the revival of the Madoc legend was rooted in a Welsh, radical, nationalist response to capitalist English colonialism in Wales: Edward Williams's 'beloved Glamorgan', for example, 'was being transformed out of all recognition by the Bristolian imperialist capitalism from historic rural landscape ... to furnace and mine' (p. 73), and this produced in him, as in many others, a dedication 'to the preservation of the Welsh language, literature and culture now seemingly on the verge of extinction with the onset of industrialisation and consequent Anglicisation' (p. 71). Other pressures, too, fed the Welsh nationalist feeling behind the Madoc revival: the influx of thousands of English workers, England's declaration of war 'against revolutionary France and the reactionary backlash against Jacobinism' that followed (p. 75), the success of Burkean reactionaries at the eisteddfodau of the 1790s (p. 75), religious repression across the board (the denial of full civil rights to Dissenters as well as the fact that 'Welsh Anglicans' were 'prohibited from practising their religion in their native language'[p. 79]), and a growing sense of 'the colonial dependence of Wales' (p. 73). In such circumstances, the Madoc legend 'allowed the Welsh ... to envision escaping their own colonisation by "the Saxons" through embarking on their own (post)colonial adventure' (p. 79) and offered 'a retreat encoded as an advance' (p. 80).

As Franklin shows, in Southey's hands, a paradox already inherent in the Welsh reworkings of the myth – 'that their American republican paradise was founded on slavery and the suppression of indigenous peoples' (p. 80) – 'soon became apparent' (p. 80). But Southey's 'fascination with military violence in a just cause' (p. 81) and his 'support for the state church as the cornerstone of the British constitution' (p. 81) led easily

into the ideological transformation of the myth. In Southey's version of it, the expedition is no longer radical or nationalistic but carries 'the white man's burden of bringing the enlightenment of Christianity to the dark continents of the world, and by the sword if necessary' (p. 82). The emphasis of the poem is on 'the necessity of the Welsh extinguishing the natives' barbaric religious rites' (p. 82).

Religion is the justification for Empire, but it is Southey's appropriation of the Welsh myth of Madoc to ram this point home – and his transformation and Anglicisation of this radical, anti-English and, in some ways, anti-colonial myth – that is of central interest here: firstly, in terms of what it reveals about the internal dynamics of the specific relationship between English Romanticism and the culture of late eighteenth-century Wales, but secondly in terms of what it tells us about the larger internal cultural dynamics of the British state in the Romantic period – about the negotiations within the relationship between the cultures that made up that state. And here we begin to glimpse another kind of English appropriation of Welsh culture during the period – the appropriation of Welsh culture by ideologies of Britishness.

Here the volume intervenes in what Weinbrot calls the 'ongoing discussion of the making of a British nation'[23] – a discussion that was given renewed momentum in the 1990s by the work of commentators such as Weinbrot himself, Robert Crawford, Colin Kidd, Pittock[24] and, perhaps most famously, Linda Colley, whose *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707–1837* explored the extent to which 'the invention of Britishness was…closely bound up with Protestantism, with war with France, and with the acquisition of empire'.[25] But sustaining that invention necessitated the displacement of past enmity with myths of originary unity, and this is one of the key issues at stake in David Punter's chapter on Blake.

As Punter shows, Blake's poetry offers one example of this kind of displacement, indeed, Blake's poetry, as illuminated by Punter, offers both a good example of, and a commentary on, some of the mechanisms by which one of Benedict Anderson's paradoxes of nationalism are set in place – that between 'the objective modernity of nations to the historian's eye' and 'their subjective antiquity in the eye of the nationalist'.[26]

Taking the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Benedict Anderson and James Whittaker as points of departure,[27] Punter focuses our attention on a 'strain that runs right through Blake's work' in which 'modern history is underlain…by…a history that is an essential founding myth of the British nation state' (p. 55), pointing out that 'the perceived

necessity of elaborating a myth of Britishness' in the late eighteenth century was 'fostered by the need to consolidate national identity in the context of international imperialism and European war'(pp. 55–56). Blake's response to this perceived necessity and its effects is a 'complex revisualisation of the historical and geographical problematic that is "Britain"' (p. 56) that highlights some of the key features of the wider, Romantic-period appropriation of Wales – indeed of the Celtic more generally – into an ideology of Britishness.

Blake offers, for example, a 'mapping' of 'contested territories' that locates the Celtic nations 'on the brink of an overwhelming extinction' (p. 57) but also 'as the guardians of the guardian, as the outer bulwarks of the state, as protection' (p. 57) *and* 'a specific staging post on the route of a diaspora, a point from which a new grouping can be promulgated' (p. 58). Equally, the 'apparent symmetries that inflect' (p. 60) Blake's portrayal of Britishness do not hide the hierarchies imposed by Britain's appropriation of the Celtic. There 'is always here a centre and a periphery, a controlling figure and a set of "figures" to be controlled: the Celtic nations are placed on the fringes, whether as guardians and protectors or mere adjuncts' (p. 60).

By foregrounding such features of the British appropriation and revisualisation of the Celtic, Blake offers, Punter suggests, a vision of 'the fallen state which is the "state" of the sleeping Albion': a state that does not strive 'to embody national aspiration' so much as 'suppress national difference … deny peripheral power and … bend everything into the service of an ever-expanding state' (p. 61).

But, as Punter shows, Blake also suggests an absolute limit to the state's ability to 'obscure the ruins that are all that remain' of what 'it has erased' (pp. 65–66) by embodying, in the figure of 'Gwendolen', 'the impossibility, indeed the inconceivability, of a resolution' of the task of forming the British state 'into a smooth space' and ridding it 'of internal contradictions, to achieve the fantasised goal of "intraconsistency"' (p. 61). For in Blake's Gwendolen, we see the Celtic nations 'remain as haunting memories, as that which continues to challenge the *absence of memory* which is the essential ground for the foundation of the state' (p. 65). Punter's analysis suggests, then, that, for Blake, the Celtic remains as 'a set of impossible transformations that bite at the heels of the state' (p. 66). Indeed, Blake's vision of the British appropriation of the Celtic ultimately highlights 'Britain's "war with itself" during his lifetime as well as problems associated with enlightenment, modernity, progress' (p. 66): problems that powerfully inform a

wide range of relationships between English Romanticism and the Celtic world, and surface repeatedly in this volume.

In the eighteenth century, as the foregoing suggests, Wales reinvented itself only to be then reinvented, in various ways, by an English, Romantic audience. The image of Wales carried forward into the Victorian period is a combination of these two reinventions, but moves forward, of course, only to be reinvented further by other interactions between the cultures of England and Wales. Edward Williams's 'mythology of Celticism', for example, 'was cut adrift from its radical origins and appropriated by a new reactionary generation of respectable Anglicans and gentry, whose picturesque and sometimes grotesque Romantic nationalism seemingly acted as a harmless safety valve for discontent with the colonial status and industrial exploitation of Wales' (p. 84). Indeed, a kind of cultural 'dialogue' between the cultures of England and Wales – an unequal dialogue fundamentally concerned with the colonisation, appropriation and exploitation of Wales and with the defence of Wales against these – that predates, underlies and makes possible that between late eighteenth-century Welsh culture and early nineteenth-century English culture – a dialogue that in some respects initiated the eighteenth-century Welsh reinvention of itself – makes itself loudly heard in the chapters of this volume.

Firstly, as Trumpener has noted, 'Welsh nationalists' in the period were 'driven by a resentment of hegemonic Englishness' (p. 15) and this volume offers numerous examples of this drive and the literature it helped to generate – the construction of a Welsh national identity by Lewis Morris and others that had its roots in a Bardic tradition and inheritance quite distinct from the classical parentage claimed and celebrated by 'Augustan' England could stand as a typical example here. Secondly, we have already seen the intimately related reaction against the immediate effects of English capitalism and imperialism that was a generative influence in the Madoc revival.

But the imaginative reconstructions of Wales that are involved in these responses to a hegemonic and imperial England are themselves in a dialogue with England and Englishness, contributing, for example a reconstruction of Englishness to the ongoing dialogue between the two cultures. For the Wales that is invented by the Madoc legend and by Lewis is defined by its difference from an England figured as unrelentingly imperialistic and tyrannical. Only against this 'other' does Wales become the land of resistance and the fight for liberty. England reconstructs Wales as a colony, Wales responds by reconstructing England as a tyrant and defines

itself against that reconstruction, only to find its self-definition reappropri-ated into England's reconstruction of itself as the centre of Britain and an expanding empire. But even before Wales is reappropriated by English cul-ture, we hear the voice of English culture in its own self-inventions. For England is one of principal intended recipients of, and target audiences for, Wales's self-refashioning. Here 'restraint had to be exercised in the transmis-sion of "alien" cultures' (p. 22), and the efforts of many Welsh Revivalists to win 'consumer approval'(p. 22) in England powerfully mark their con-structions of Welshness. Edward Williams's *Poems, Lyrical and Pastoral*, for example, offer images of Wales and the Welsh Bardic tradition 'calculated to appeal to aristocratic subscribers like Elizabeth Montagu, and writers such as Anna Barbauld, Francis Burney Anna Seward' (p. 77), while Evan Evans does not imitate his own Bards in their 'refusal to be culturally ap-propriated by the dominant power': instead, Evans writes 'in English . . . supplying footnoted allusions to Milton, Dryden and Goldsmith' and hand-ing the poem's climax over to Gray (p. 27).[28] As a result of such compromises and capitulations, eighteenth-century popular Celticism and literary (and to varying degrees anti-English) Welsh nationalism often produce a Wales paradoxically shaped by English literary tastes and, in the process, politically neutralised – perfectly packaged, we might say, for the English Romantic depoliticisation and/or appropriation of it.

The Wales of the Celtic Revival, then, is often the product of this kind of dialogue between Welsh impulses and English tastes. But equally, the Welsh impulses themselves are shaped by an earlier, ideological dia-logue with England. For we can frequently hear the distinctive idiom of Whiggism – an idiom of 'liberty', 'independence' and 'resistance' against 'corruption' and 'tyranny' – in the Revival's celebrations of Welsh history: in Lewis Morris's celebration of his ancestors' struggle 'with a superior power for their liberty' (p. 24), in the 'resistance' against English 'tyranny' of Evan Evans's bards, in the powerful influence of Locke on William Jones's *Principles of Government, in a Dialogue between a Scholar and a Peasant* (1782) as well as in his one-time aim of writing 'a verse epic of tremen-dous scope' to be called 'Britain Discovered' and 'intended as a poeti-cal panegyric on our excellent Constitution, . . . as a national epic' (p. 35). Figures of Welsh history are frequently either appealing because of their seeming closeness to the Whig ideal, or reimagined through the ideals of English Whiggism. To a considerable extent, in other words, Wales's eighteenth-century self-reinvention is a reconstruction of the Welsh past along ideological lines laid down by an English political tradition.[29] As

a result, its assimilation into various English agendas in the Romantic period – a period in which English writers as diverse as Wordsworth and Byron could think of themselves as in some way belonging to the Whig tradition – was all the easier to achieve.

But then, this kind of cultural interaction, in which Wales is colonised, appropriated or exploited – economically, culturally and spiritually – by English ideologies and agendas, but responds by refashioning itself in self-defence, only to be recolonised, reappropriated and re-exploited, has a long history. The history of the Madoc legend marks out key stages of this cultural history: not least its 'original status as wish fulfilment after the principality's subjugation by Edward I, and the crushing of the subsequent rebellion of Owain Glyn Dwr' (p. 83) and its co-option 'to the service of promoting colonialism' in 'Tudor times' (p. 83).[30]

Similar histories can be traced, of course, in the Anglo-Irish and Anglo-Scottish dialogues that run parallel to this Anglo-Welsh history. But this volume is concerned with those dialogues between all the four nations of Britain that powerfully informed, and that were, in their turn, powerfully informed by, English Romantic writing. In the case of all of the territories of England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and at both the sites of Romanticism and Celticism we see negotiated dialogues where complicated questions of aesthetics, cultural politics and nation are asked, and answered in equally complex fashion. It is as a contribution to the mapping out of these multiple late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century British cultural territories and inter-national dialogues that this volume offers itself to the reader.